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Book 16 3726

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CONSOLATIO
A MEMORIAL ODE



CONSOLATIO

Ode in memory of those members of
the Class of Nineteen Hundred and
Three of Stanford University who died
during the month of their graduation

BY

RAYMOND MACDONALD ALDEN

Vir sapiens laetus ex his tenebris
in lucem illam excesserit
Quo cum venerimus, tum denique vivemus.
—CICERO.



Paul Elder and Company
Publishers, San Francisco

Oct. 27. 1903
71347

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The Tomoyé Press
San Francisco

WMP 2620134

This Ode was read at the Annual Commencement of the University, May 25, 1903, and is published at the request of certain of the graduates and their friends.

I.



HE vernal hills bend close,
in friendly mass,
And Nature warmly
smiles
Where golden poppies glow
among the wheat,
And broadcast blossoms
mark the advancing feet
Of Summer's dauntless legions, as they pass
The valley's welcoming miles.
The earth keeps holiday,
And they that lean to listen hear her say:
All who are young, rejoice today with me!
Break forth in singing, each in his degree!
But chiefly you for whom,
While all the world makes room,
Your Mother lifts her gates in high solemnity.

II.



UT ah, she waits; and why
Is sober youth's reply
Delayed, while doubts oppress
His natural eagerness?
Why does the pageant, at
the gate
Where myriad hopes and
longings wait,
Pause, as though stricken by some shattering
fate?

While some, in mute distress,
Look to and fro, as for a comrade's face,
When none is marching in his vacant place.

III.



WE saw the fair young Mother
of the throng
Standing to bless them, and
to hear their song
Of tender parting, ere they
broke away,
With mingled tearful smiles
and smiling tears

Greeting their free new day;—

It was but yesternorn, men say,

And yet to her already it seemeth years.

For while she waited, smiling, in her hand

The keys of the tomorrows, which she gave

Her children, bidding them through all the
land

Go forth, and open, conquer, and be brave,—

There came a shadowing wing

That rose from out the underworld of Death,

The taint of nightshade on its hated breath,

And swept the withered leaves of Autumn
into Spring.

And when its presence passed,

Lo, of her children there were some whose
place

Was empty, and the smile upon her face

Was frozen in the winter of that blast.

IV.



O stands she, pale and still,
With the mist yet o'er her
eyes,
And the tremulous surprise
Of her grief having its will
With the drifting of her
hair.
Young, loving, tender, fair,
Now will she take her other children home
Closer to the warm beating of her heart;
Yet from the folded flock her yearnings roam
To them who go for evermore apart.

V.



THE sacred place, the central
shrine of all

Her joys and sorrows, now
at length hath grown

Complete, since under
its wall

Her thousand sons and
daughters, at her call

And that of Death, have come to mourn as
one,—

One heart that common griefs and fears have
made.

Here they had sung and prayed,

Here worshiped, in the shade

Of cloistered aisle and roof of storied stone;

Here rolled the organ's solemn voice,—

Now whispered "Hush!"—now cried "Re-
joice!"

Here youth and love had plighted troth,

While seraphs leaned and smiled on both;

Here crimson-tinted sunlight, reverent, kissed

The altar of the holy Eucharist.

But one thing still was missed,—

Sorrow, to fully consecrate the shrine

Of love and pity and of hope divine.

Now, in the mystic presence of our dead,

It hath been perfected.

VI.



UT they! O they were young,
and hoped so much!

The brow of youth
was bright

With dew that shimmered
in the morning light
Of promises and prophecies,
e'en such

As none had dared to dream in earlier day.

And in this time of May,
One looking in the deeps of their young eyes
Caught embryo glimpses of their coming
strength—

Shadows of great emprise,
And ghostly continents they should explore;
New Darien peaks whereon to stand at
length,

Masters of untold lore.

And softer lights foretold the dreams
Of the sweet pangs of love, that sometimes
seems

The dearest hope which all this weary world
redeems.

O heart of heaven! must now this bourgeon
bloom,

Blotting its happy future from our sight,
Out from the Spring's illimitable light,
Fade in the dateless empire of the tomb?

VII.



O! saith our heart; ah, no!
Their life fadeth not so.
Here on the brink they
stood
Of all that is great and
good;
They lived for the coming
hope:

Their future hath caught them up.
Love and the world before them—
Infinite kingdoms o'er them—
They sooner found than we the path
To that their coming empire hath,
Borne from us all in love and not in wrath.
The continents that swam before their eyes
In the young conqueror's vision,
Unfold in realms elysian,
And peerless unscaled peaks rise ever in
their skies.

Dropping our humbler keys,
They open great tomorrows of the spirit,
And evermore magnificently inherit
The golden doors of nobler mysteries.
Through vaulted cloisters of new wisdom led
By masters such as freer creatures merit
(Great souls of ages dead),
Their life and lore increase, which here have
vanishéd.

VIII.



O'while our Mother spreads
her gates apart
For those who enter bound-
less life today,
She cries "All hail!" to speed
them on their way,
"All hail!" and then—
"Farewell!"

And in the secret chambers of her heart
There echoes low the same farewell and hail
For those who in the life immortal dwell.

She bids them forward go,—
Limitless lands explore,—
Calls sweetly to them: "Still my children,
though

I see your upturned faces here no more!"

And unto us: "Be strong!

God's years are sure and long.

There is time enough and room enough for
all

The work and all the sorrow 'neath the sun;
Do well today: today is never done:
If one world fail, another answereth your
call."

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